

## David Degrazia

“The Ethics of Animal Research:  
What are the Prospects for  
Agreement”

### The state of the debate

On the side of biomedicine: they see animal advocates as “radicals” who are “irrational”

Yet, in the research community “fewer have had any rigorous training in ethical reasoning, and hardly any have read much of the leading literature on animal ethics.”

On the animal advocate side: the “Humane society opposes factory farming but not humane forms of animal husbandry.” There is also the Animal Liberation Front, who are more violent in their approach. But at the very least, all animal advocates oppose current levels of animal research.

### Degrazia's position

“...my own view shares with these [utilitarian] theories the framework of equal consideration for animals: the principle that we must give equal moral weight to comparable interests, no matter who has those interests.... But, I believe that the arguments for and against equal consideration are nearly equal in strength. I therefore have respect for progressive views that attribute moral standing to animals without giving them fully equal consideration.”

He accepts some sort of “progressive, “sliding scale” view. That is, there are degrees that different animals can feel pain, so that that extent, the degree of research can be done.

But he acknowledges that he may be wrong. So, he weights practical aspects of animal research.

### Points of Agreement

What the biomedical community and animal protection advocates do (and should) agree on:

1. It's not the case that morality has nothing to do with the use of animals biomedical research (i.e. moral questions can be raised).
  - Why? Animals (at least sentient ones) can be harmed.
2. Many animals (at least the mammals) are capable of a wide range of negative mental states e.g. pain, discomfort, fear, boredom, and suffering.
3. Animals have an interest in not experiencing pain, discomfort, suffering, etc. Thus we are obligated to ensure that they don't in the course of research.
4. Some animals (wolves, apes, monkeys) have an interest in interacting with their own species. Thus we are obligated to ensure they have access to this companionship in the course of research

### Points of Agreement

5. Alternative methods of research should be explored and used when possible.
  - Cheaper
  - acquire public support
6. Humans and animals differ in morally significant ways.
  - animals not self-determining
  - worse to kill a human than an animal
7. Some animal research is justified.

### Points of Disagreement

1. How *much* moral status to ascribe to animals. How strong our obligations are towards them.
2. The specific circumstances under which the need to promote human health is sufficiently important to justify harming research animals.
3. Whether or not the current protections available to research animals are adequate
4. Whether or not animals have 'life interests' in addition to having an interest in not suffering.